WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A network-based system for trading physical commodities in real-time, said system comprising:

(a) a server coupled to a network;

(b) said network including a plurality of ports for coupling user stations to said network for communicating with said server;

(c) said server including a component for generating a trading board, said trading board comprising posted offers for a physical commodity and said trading board being referenced to a trading zone, wherein said trading zone comprises a geographic area having one or more suppliers of the physical commodity and one or more potential buyers of said physical commodity, and said server including a component for sending said trading board to one or more of said user stations coupled to said network;

(d) said user stations including a display component for displaying said trading boards, and further including a component for accepting a posted offer on said trading board and communicating said acceptance to said server.

2. The network-based system as claimed in claim 1, wherein said user stations include a component for posting bids for the physical commodity on said trading board.

3. The network-based system as claimed in claim 2, further including a freight rate mechanism, said freight rate mechanism including a component for adjusting a posted offer on a delivered basis for buyers, and a component for adjusting the posted bid on a delivered to trading zone basis for suppliers.

4. The network-based system as claimed in claim 3, wherein said network comprises the Internet and World Wide Web.

5. The network-based system as claimed in claim 2, wherein said server includes a database for storing information related to said posted offers and said

posted bids, and wherein said trading board displayed on said user stations includes an update component for accessing and receiving said information from said database over said network and displaying said information at the user stations.

6.   The network-based system as claimed in claim 5, wherein said trading board includes a graph component, said graph component including a graphical view selectively displayable on said user station, and said graph component including a component for receiving current information from said database for updating said graphical view.

7.   The network-based system as claimed in claim 6, wherein said graphical view comprises a graphical mapping of transaction prices for the physical commodity over time.

8.   The network-based system as claimed in claim 6, wherein said graphical view comprises a graphical mapping of the number of posted offers and posted bids versus price per offer and bid.

9.   The network-based system as claimed in claim 3, wherein said server includes a regional transportation database for storing a plurality of supplier regions, a plurality of buyer regions, and a plurality of said trading zones, and each of said supplier and said buyer regions and said trading zones having a defined geographic center for use by said freight rate mechanism.

10.   A network-based system for trading physical commodities in real-time, said system comprising:

      (a)   a server coupled to a network;

      (b)   said network including a plurality of ports for coupling user stations to said network for communicating with said server;

      (c)   said server including a component for generating a trading board, said trading board comprising posted offers for a physical commodity and said

trading board being referenced to a trading zone, wherein said trading zone comprises a geographic area having one or more suppliers of the physical commodity and one or more potential buyers of said physical commodity, and said server including a component for sending said trading board to one or more of said user stations coupled to said network;

      (d)   said user stations including a component for posting a bid for a physical commodity being offered on said trading board;

      (e)   said user stations including a display component for displaying said trading boards, and further including a component for accepting a posted offer on said trading board and communicating said acceptance to said server.

11.   The network-based system as claimed in claim 10, wherein said component for posting bids includes a component for posting said bid on a plurality of trading boards.

12.   The network-based system as claimed in claim 10, wherein said component for posting a bid further includes a component for rating potential suppliers responding to said posted bid.

13.   The network-based system as claimed in claim 11 or 12, wherein said component for posting a bid further includes a component for setting a time duration said posted bid remains open.

14.   The network-based system as claimed in claim 12, wherein said component for posting a bid further includes a component for specifying a future delivery date for the physical commodity associated with said posted bid.

15.   The network-based system as claimed in claim 11, wherein said component for posting bids includes a component for modifying said bid posted to a plurality of trading boards.

16.　The network-based system as claimed in claim 10, wherein said server includes a component for generating a plurality of trading boards, and a component for removing a posted offer which has been accepted from all of said trading boards on which said posted offer appeared.

17.　The network-based system as claimed in claim 10, further including a freight rate mechanism, said freight rate mechanism including a component for adjusting a posted offer on a delivered basis for buyers, and a component for adjusting the posted bid on a delivered to trading zone basis for suppliers, and said freight rate mechanism comprising a regional transportation database for storing a plurality of supplier regions, a plurality of buyer regions, and a plurality of said trading zones, and each of said supplier and said buyer regions and said trading zones having a defined geographic center for use by said freight rate mechanism.

18.　A computer data signal embodied in a carrier wave, said carrier wave comprising:

　　(a)　a trading board view code segment; and

　　(b)　said trading board view code segment comprising a plurality of posted offer code segments and plurality of posted bid code segments and a trade zone code segment, said trading board view segment defining a trading board view referenced a trading zone defined by said trade zone code segment, and wherein said trading zone corresponds to a geographic area.